



# Xaverian College

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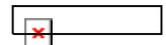
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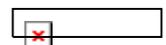
**Basic information about the college**



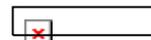
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|                              |                                          |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Name of college:             | Xaverian College                         |
| Type of college:             | Sixth Form College                       |
| Principal:                   | Anthony Andrews                          |
| Address of college:          | Lower Park Road<br>Manchester<br>M14 5RB |
| Telephone number:            | 0161 224 1781                            |
| Fax number:                  | 0161 248 9039                            |
| Chair of governors:          | June Tracey                              |
| Unique reference number:     | 130502                                   |
| Name of reporting inspector: | Ruth James HMI                           |
| Dates of inspection:         | 8-12 April 2002                          |

**Part A: Summary**

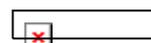


**Information about the college**



Xaverian College is a Roman Catholic sixth form college that was established in 1977 as part of the re-organisation of Catholic secondary education in Manchester. The college is located in Rusholme, about two miles south of the city centre, and is within the Diocese of Salford. Most students live within the boundaries of the Manchester City Council area. There is considerable social and economic deprivation in the area, Manchester ranks 7<sup>th</sup> out of 354 in the index of multiple deprivation and 64% of students live in postcodes defined by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as high deprivation. In 2001/02, approximately 500 students at the college are eligible for educational maintenance allowances. In 2001, the proportion of students within the Manchester City Council area gaining five A\* to C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was 31%, almost 20% below the national average. The college has close links with local Catholic high schools and other schools in the Manchester area. Some 58% of current students are Catholic. Approximately 31% of students have a minority ethnic background. At the time of the inspection, approximately 1,250 students were enrolled at the college, almost all of whom were aged 16 to 18 and studying on full-time courses. Some 83% were studying on level 3 courses, with the remainder on level 2 and level 1 courses. No courses are provided for adult students. All students follow a compulsory and well-planned programme of religious education.

### How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged the quality of education to be good in five of the eight curriculum areas inspected, outstanding in one and satisfactory in two. Most teaching is good or better. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

#### **Key strengths**

- good teaching in many areas
- strong leadership
- good pass rates for many courses
- effective support for individual students
- good learning materials
- good curriculum management

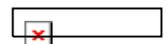
- a strong commitment to the Catholic ethos and mission.

***What should be improved***

- many students late arrival at lessons
- range of courses below level 3
- retention rates on some courses
- group tutorial provision
- quality assurance for cross-college areas
- promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

**Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**



*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).*

| Area    | Overall judgements about provision, and comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Science | <b>Good.</b> Pass rates were satisfactory on General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, and good for GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses in 2001. There is much good teaching, especially in chemistry and environmental science. Most teaching is well planned, but, in a few lessons, opportunities to meet |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | the differing needs of students are missed. Teachers demonstrate impressive knowledge of and enthusiasm for their subjects, and make skilful use of assessment. Retention of current first-year students in GCE AS biology and physics is low.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Mathematics                          | <b>Good.</b> Retention and pass rates are generally satisfactory or better. Teaching is mainly good, but the use of information technology (IT) is underdeveloped. Course management and lesson planning are good. Students' progress is effectively monitored and their work is carefully marked.                                                                                                                                   |
| Business                             | <b>Good.</b> There are high pass rates on most business and economics courses. Learning is carefully planned and teaching is mostly good. Students make good use of topical learning materials. Their progress is thoroughly assessed and monitored. There is a poor retention rate on the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced programme. Attendance is unsatisfactory and students are often late to lessons. |
| Computing and information technology | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Many students achieve good results at level 3, particularly in GCE A-level computing. The pass rate for GCSE information and communication technology (ICT) is very low. The retention rate in GCE A-level IT was unsatisfactory in 2001. Learning materials provided for students, and support for their work on projects, are good.                                                                           |
| Visual and performing arts and media | <b>Outstanding.</b> Very good and supportive teaching contributes to consistently high pass rates on most courses. Good preparation of practical work and disciplined learning help students to work effectively on their own. There are excellent resources and accommodation for art and media, but some poor accommodation for drama and music. Management is highly effective at course level.                                   |
| Humanities                           | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Students' pass rates in humanities are satisfactory, and good on the new GCE AS course. Most teaching in humanities is satisfactory and it is good in classical civilisation and geography. Many students are not set sufficiently demanding work.                                                                                                                                                              |
| Social sciences                      | <b>Good.</b> Very good teaching enables students across a wide range of ability to succeed. GCE A-level pass rates are above national averages in sociology and psychology. Retention rates are low in psychology and sociology. Subjects are well managed.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| English                              | <b>Good.</b> There is much good teaching. Teachers give good individual support to students and monitor their work well. Results at GCE A level are very good in most subjects. There is an appropriate range of courses at level 3, but level 2 provision does not adequately meet the needs of all students.                                                                                                                       |

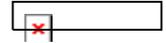
### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The college is strongly led and is well managed. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The sense of community and the care for the individual flow from the Catholic mission, which permeates all aspects of college life. Governors have a good strategic overview, monitor academic performance effectively, and have good links with curriculum areas. Arrangements for quality assurance and review of the curriculum are suitably detailed and thorough.

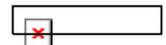
unsatisfactory. Quality assurance activities are not sufficiently developed in cross-college areas.

### **To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?**



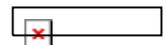
The college's approach to inclusion is satisfactory. The college welcomes students from all faiths and a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. The introduction of a foundation course at level 1, and a level 4 pre-degree course in science and engineering for the University of Manchester has increased opportunities for participation in further education (FE). The college admits students to level 3 courses with lower grade profiles at GCSE than is usual in other sixth form colleges. Most teachers recognise that their teaching methods and material must be appropriate for students with widely differing backgrounds and achievement. In only a few subjects are teachers insensitive to such considerations, using, for example, unduly complicated language in lessons. There is insufficient promotion of the equal opportunities policy and little monitoring of its effectiveness.

### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**



Support for students is good. Pre-course guidance procedures are comprehensive. The prospectus and other college literature give good information on courses. Through extensive school, local and diocesan links the college is well known in the local Catholic community. The induction programme is good and students appreciate the range of activities that are provided. Students are well supported in their studies and also benefit from the availability of the lay chaplain and counsellor for spiritual and personal support. Where additional learning support needs are identified, students are well supported. In some subject areas, however, identification of students additional support needs is inadequate. Working relationships between students and teachers are good. There is good support in one-to-one tutorials. Careers education and guidance are strong.

### **Students' views of the college**



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

#### ***What students like about the college***

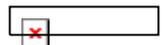
- friendly, supportive teachers
- extra help given by teachers
- good teaching and interesting lessons

- good learning materials
- an adult atmosphere and mutual respect amongst staff and students
- safe environment
- good range and choice of courses and subjects
- good induction arrangements.

***What they feel could be improved***

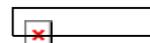
- access to IT facilities
- social areas
- group tutorials
- key skills teaching.

**Other information**



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the LLSC. The LLSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) receives the college's post inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

## Part B: The college as a whole

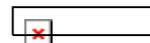


### Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

| Aspect & learner type | Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) % | Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) % | Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) % |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Teaching 16-18        | 67                                      | 31                              | 2                                               |
| Learning 16-18        | 63                                      | 35                              | 2                                               |

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

### Achievement and standards



1. The college recruits almost two thirds of its students from wards which have a higher than average index of social deprivation. Comparisons of students' attainment in this report are made against data for all sixth form colleges, and are not adjusted to take account of the educational or social background of students.

#### **16-18 year olds**

2. Retention rates on level 3 courses have improved over the three years to 1999/2000, and are in line with national averages. The college's own data indicate that the retention rate of 80% in 2000/01 is similar to that of the previous year. At level 2, retention rates have declined from 79% in 1998, to 73% in 2001, and are significantly below national averages. The college's data indicate that there has been no discernible improvement in 2000/01. At level 3, overall pass rates are low compared with national averages and show no discernible improvement between 1998 and 2001. These rates are affected by the college practice of providing curriculum enrichment in part through students taking the GCE A level in general studies. The pass rate has been low on this course and many students chose not to enter for the examination. When the general studies students are excluded from the calculations, the overall pass rate at level 3 is similar to the sixth form college average. The policy of requiring students to take general studies was discontinued in September 2001. Pass rates at level 2 have been significantly above the national average and, at 97%, have improved further in 2000/01.

3. The largest groups of subjects taken by students are for qualifications at GCE AS and GCE A level. The average points score for students entering two or more GCE A levels improved from 13.8 in 1997 to 15 in 2000, which is similar to the average for the local education authority, but below the average of 18.5 for England. The number of students obtaining the high grades A to C is well below national averages but, if general studies is excluded, the proportion has improved over the last three years and, in 2001, at 58%, compares favourably with other sixth form colleges. In most subjects, pass rates in 2001 were at or above national averages. Pass rates of 100% were recorded in further

mathematics, media studies, music and English literature. In government and politics, the pass rate improved in 2001 compared with the previous year, but remained below the national average. In history, an unsatisfactory pass rate of 81% in 2000 declined to 53% in 2001. In several subjects, including physics, economics, computing, art, media, music and psychology, the proportion of students obtaining high grades is significantly above national averages. In geography, business studies, IT, government and politics, French and German, the proportion of high grades has been below national averages for at least two of the three years to 2001. Some 100 GCE A-level students return to the college for a third year either to retake their second-year courses to improve their grades or to take a new, one-year GCE A-level course. Over 90% of these students complete the additional year and a similar proportion achieves a pass. In 2000, of those who retook a subject in their third year, 83% improved their grade. The college's data for 2001 show that the overall pass rate on GCE AS courses was 86%. Pass rates of over 95% were recorded in drama/theatre studies, media studies, music, classical civilisation, economics, religious studies, English and English language and literature. Pass rates significantly below the college average were recorded in mathematics, French and psychology.

4. Pass rates on advanced GNVQ course were good for the three years to 2000 and compared favourably with national averages. An apparent decline to 80% in 2001 may have been affected by omissions in the recording of students' achievements in the college management information system. Pass rates of 100% have been recorded in two of the last three years to 2001 in art and design, health and care, leisure and tourism and business. Retention rates on these courses improved to above the national average in 2000, having been significantly below for the previous two years. In 2001, the retention rate on GNVQ courses fell to 68% from 79% in the previous year.

5. The retention rate on intermediate GNVQ courses was good and improving between 1997 and 2000. In 2001, the retention rate, at 73%, compared unfavourably with the previous record. Pass rates have been good and well above national averages for three of the last four years to 2000. The retention rate for students who take GCSE subjects declined to below national averages in 2000, although there was some improvement in 2001. Some 50% of the students who completed over the last three years achieved a pass grade at A\* to C. In GCSE mathematics, the A\* to C pass rate has been above national averages in the two years to 2001. In English, the A\* to C pass rate improved dramatically to 60% in 2001, from a low of 35% in the previous year.

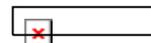
6. The college uses two national systems to measure how well students perform in relation to their qualifications at entry. The results on the system, which compares a single colleges performance with a large number of other post-16 providers, shows that the progress which students have made compared with their achievements at entry has improved steadily over several years. In general, students now obtain grades that are in line with predictions at entry. There is some variation between subjects. In 2001, students taking computing and psychology obtained results at GCE A level which were significantly better than expected, but in history they under-performed. Those students who took GCE AS courses in 2001 achieved better grades than expected in biology, business, economics, IT, media studies, music and religious studies, but lower grades in psychology. Data for most other subjects show that students achieved results that might have been expected from predictions based on their qualifications at entry.

7. The standard of students' work observed is at least satisfactory and much is good. Many students, especially those on vocational courses, improve their skills of working with others and learn to plan their work effectively. Students' on courses in business and mathematics show insufficient evidence of the development of appropriate skills in IT. In mathematics, evaluation and research skills are developed well and, in social sciences, students demonstrate confidence through oral presentations. In science, law and history, the ability of students to study independently is limited by an over-reliance on information presented by the teacher. Opportunities were missed in business and economics for students to develop their awareness of current business practice through external visits or other links with the business community.

8. In the current academic year 2001/02, the college introduced a new computerised system for recording and reporting on student attendance. In the lessons observed by inspectors, the average attendance was 80% which was lower than the average of 86.2% for the college to February 2002, as indicated by the computerised system. The highest attendance rates were recorded in art and

media and social sciences; the lowest rate was in computing and IT. Most students who complete their studies progress to higher education (HE), employment or training. Most who leave their courses early, do so to enter employment or to continue their education or training elsewhere.

## Quality of education and training



9. Teaching, learning and attainment were observed by inspectors in 126 sessions. Overall, in just over two thirds of these, teaching was good or better, and, in just under one third, teaching was satisfactory. The proportion of lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory, at 2%, was very low. The highest proportions of lessons where good teaching was found were in visual and performing arts and media, social sciences and science. In these areas, at least 80% of lessons were graded good or better. The percentage of good or better grades was much lower in humanities, and computing and IT. The percentage of lessons graded as very good or excellent was 33% overall.

10. In the most effective lessons, teaching was lively and dynamic and the teachers' enthusiasm was communicated effectively to students. Tasks and activities were appropriate, and lessons moved forward at a suitable pace. Attention was given to the needs of all students. They were well supported in tasks that were appropriate to their level of ability. Schemes of work and lesson plans were thorough and appropriately detailed, and learning materials, often prepared by teachers, were good.

11. In a few lessons, planning was less effective. Aims and objectives were not clear or were not met. Teachers occasionally failed to give adequate help to students who had made errors and did not allow sufficient time for tasks or activities to be completed properly.

12. There are sufficient resources to support learning. Most learning materials produced by teachers are good and students rate them highly. In some subjects, materials used in lessons are held centrally on the college network and are available to students electronically. The resources centre is too small. At times, students experience difficulty in gaining access to computers. The current book stock is well used. There is an appropriate range of Catholic periodicals. A new library cataloguing system has been established and is available online to students across the college campus. It features a keyword search option that helps students to locate learning materials more easily. The resources centre is to move to a new building in the summer of 2002. The new accommodation includes a well-resourced centre with many new computers, an enlarged book stock and enough space for complete class groups to work in. Art facilities have been improved since the last inspection. These are now housed in a new building, which provides suitable accommodation and good resources. In older parts of the college, the quality of accommodation is uneven. Media facilities, especially the digital editing suite of 14 Apple Mac computers, are good. Areas dedicated to music are not appropriate for students studying and practising music and soundproofing is inadequate. The college chapel is at the heart of college life; it is a peaceful and suitably decorated haven for quiet prayer and reflection. The college has a nursery providing childcare for children of staff and students.

13. Teachers are graduates with teacher training qualifications. Technical support staff are appropriately qualified and provide good support in, for example, computing and IT and science. There are good staff development opportunities covering subject-specific and teaching skills as well as national initiatives, for example, the new qualifications framework. Most teachers take up these opportunities. There is good support for newly qualified teachers. A continuing professional development plan is comprehensive. It targets the development of the information and learning technology (ILT) skills of teachers, especially in web design. This development is an aspect of the college ILT strategy to ensure that teachers are equipped to manage students' learning as effectively as possible using IT-based resources including a 'managed learning environment'. The college's reprographics centre is connected to the network and offers staff electronic access providing a rapid and effective service for the production of teaching materials.

14. The college accommodation is good quality. It is well used and provides a welcoming atmosphere, especially in business and humanities. The site includes spacious grounds with lawns and trees and a new courtyard area. The college has made several improvements to its accommodation since the last inspection. Social and recreational areas for students have been expanded and a relocated reception area is available for visitors and students. For students with mobility difficulties, access to some older buildings has been improved by the installation of lifts and ramps; in other buildings access is still inadequate or non-existent, notably in business, mathematics and English. The college has plans to improve areas where access is inadequate by the end of 2003. Throughout the college, good use is made of relevant up-to-date subject material to create vibrant wall displays. Students' work is celebrated in this way and enhances the classrooms and corridors wherever it is found. There is some inappropriate use of fire doors. Computer rooms do not have effective heat-control systems and the drama studio floor is not suitable for dance activity.

15. The college has well-defined arrangements to review the progress of students on courses. There are termly reviews by subject teachers of students' progress that take into account their own predicted grades based on prior attainment at entry. Students are invited to self-assess their progress prior to the reviews, but the action plans to address weaknesses identified in the reviews are not always clearly defined. Personal tutors discuss progress with students across the range of subjects they are taking; reports are sent to parents twice a year. The cycle of review was revised in 2001 to take account of the mid-year examinations introduced with Curriculum 2000 revisions.

16. Subject teams are encouraged in subject handbooks to provide students with information on homework and assessment policies. These handbooks vary both in the amount of detail they contain and the clarity and usefulness of the information to students. Assessment is generally closely matched to the requirements of examination bodies, but there is no clear set of college procedures across all subjects for the implementation of minimum standards or good practice in assessment activities. Faculty heads and subject leaders are responsible for ensuring that there are suitable arrangements for standardisation or internal moderation of assessment. On GNVQ and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses, there are well-documented requirements for the assessment and recording of students' progress. There are good examples of thorough standardisation of marking on these courses. Other subjects use common mark schemes, but opportunities in some subjects are missed to engage in cross marking to ensure that common standards are actually being applied.

17. Most students are set work regularly, but, in some humanities subjects, written work is not sufficiently demanding. Student work is marked fairly and accurately and the detail of the written feedback to students allows them to identify what they need to do to improve. However, some student work in business, humanities subjects, computing and science either receives comments on the quality of work that are too brief or it gives too little indication of action required to remedy errors.

18. A large number of level 3 courses is offered at the college including over 30 GCE AS/A-level subjects and 6 AVCEs. At level 2, three GNVQ intermediate courses are offered as well as seven GCSE subjects. In 2001, a foundation course at level 1 was introduced. Recent developments since 2000 include collaboration with Manchester University to develop university foundation courses at level 4 and a pre-degree foundation year in science and engineering was introduced in 2001/02. The college has extended its range of courses to include a GCE A-level, one-year course. Most courses offered by the college are at level 3. There has been little development at level 2 since the last inspection in September 1999 and enrolments have declined since then. The proportion of students progressing from level 2 to level 3 courses in college has, however, improved.

19. Curriculum 2000 and the new qualifications framework have enabled students to select options at different levels to reflect their GCSE profiles. They have also been able to select from enrichment options to add to their key skills and tutorial lessons. Take-up of the varied enrichment options has been low. Many students make use of the extra support lessons which staff provide for their subjects. These lessons often take place at the same time as enrichment activities. Religious education lessons give students the opportunity to explore a range of moral and personal development issues. Within the 'Excellence Challenge' framework, gifted and talented students are

identified and funds are used to provide them with opportunities to enhance and enrich their education.

20. The college has planned for opportunities to provide evidence of the development of students' key skills within each course and subject. This approach has enabled course teams to specify assessments, which meet key skills criteria, but has not been consistently applied in all subject areas. The relevance to students of assessment tasks has sometimes been poor.

21. The college participates in several local education forums, for example the Wythenshawe post-16 strategy group. The college has close links with local Catholic high schools and other schools in the Manchester area and is involved with the Manchester lifelong-learning partnership. Other links involve: the provision of education and training for work-based trainees at Manchester City Football Club; and contact with officers of the Greater Manchester Police force who run the community drugs awareness programme.

22. The Catholic ethos permeates college life. The college fulfils its legal requirement for collective worship and the provision of religious education. Daily college prayer involves some staff and a few students. There is a well-planned programme of general religious education for all students that most find relevant to their lives. Religious studies at GCE A level offers both the study of ethics and a New Testament study of the early Christian church and Pauline letters. All students attend weekly assemblies and the voluntary Friday Mass is for both students and staff. When the whole college community joins in celebrations of mass at key points in the year, students participate through music and readings, which include extracts from the Koran as well as from Christian scripture. Students are able to attend annual residential retreats and there is keen competition for the small number of places available. Through the chaplaincy, students contribute to the wider community, for example in raising money for the Christmas toy appeal or for Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and by regular visits to residents in a local home for elderly people.

23. Pre-course guidance procedures are comprehensive. Pupils in feeder schools from Year 9 onwards become increasingly aware of the opportunities offered by the college. There is good co-operation between schools and the college on subject choice and careers events. A well-planned programme of open events, road shows and taster days, supported by an attractive, informative prospectus and clear handouts, provides good information on college courses. Links with schools, ranging from sports coaching lessons provided at the college for primary school children to participation in Education Business Partnership events in feeder schools in Years 9 and 10, mean that the college is well known to potential applicants. Through a range of charitable projects, involvement in local and diocesan activities, and attendance of family members at the college, Xaverian College is well known within the local Catholic community. Through school visits and activities in college, other potential applicants are well informed about study opportunities. Good, impartial advice is available both in interviews once students have been offered a place, and again when GCSE results are known. While most students receive sound guidance which enables them to start on appropriate courses, in some cases students are allowed to commence courses for which they are less well equipped. Admissions staff believe that such an approach is in line with its mission to allow students to attempt their chosen courses, even if they subsequently transfer to other courses. There are examples of students taking on courses with only modest prior attainment who have subsequently achieved well. Induction to the college is effective. Students appreciate the range of activities and information provided. They are made aware of their rights and responsibilities and of the college mission.

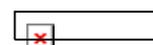
24. Students particularly appreciate the community atmosphere at the college and the concern for individuals. These characteristics find expression in the variety of whole-college and voluntary opportunities for worship and in the support for individuals. Students receive good support, both in one-to-one tutorial lessons and through the additional, curricular help provided by subject teachers. Individual reviews enable tutors to identify students who are having difficulties with their studies and to discuss plans for improvement with them. The chaplaincy provides a focus for a range of activities, that include: planning and participation in liturgies; projects which support the wider community, such as the Christmas parcel appeal; and events such as the Lourdes pilgrimage for groups of students and staff, run in conjunction with the Diocesan pilgrimage. A student-led Christian Union, attended mainly by evangelical Christians, meets regularly to read and reflect on

scripture. Many students benefit from education maintenance allowances; financial support is also available through access funds in cases of hardship or to assist with participation in activities. The chaplain is available for informal discussion and students can arrange to see the counsellor, who has appropriate professional qualifications and experience. The college also has links with a range of external support agencies. Although there is a rota of priests who celebrate Mass at the college, at the time of the inspection, there was no priest to support the sacramental life of the college.

25. Where additional learning support needs are identified during or prior to induction, or when subject teachers refer their students, the support given is strong; documentation is good and records of weekly support are thorough. In some subject areas, there is inadequate identification of students who could benefit from such support. Working relationships between tutors and students are good. One-to-one tutorials are effective and the observation programme for one-to-one tutorials has led to thorough reflection on practice among tutors, but lessons for the whole tutorial group are less effective. There are examples of good practice, such as the second-year lessons on financial management, but in other lessons less valuable use is made of the time, and on some occasions these lessons finish early. There are clear procedures for monitoring attendance, but no action is taken by tutors unless students are absent on three occasions. The first responsibility for monitoring of lateness lies with subject teachers. Their approach is inconsistent and students arriving late disrupt some lessons.

26. Careers education and guidance are strong. The college works effectively with the local careers partnership and has received quality standards awards for all three aspects of its provision. Good programmes of careers education are run at appropriate times of year in group tutorial lessons. Careers guidance interviews are available to all students who request them. Effective co-operation with careers advisers ensures that early leavers have an interview prior to ending their studies. Students value the help they receive when preparing to apply for HE; other students comment favourably on the support they receive when seeking direct progress to apprenticeship and employment. The college newsletter gives regular information on careers opportunities and employment vacancies, both full time and part time. There is a very well-stocked careers library.

## Leadership and management



27. Leadership and management are good. The college is strongly led and well managed. The principal and senior management are strongly committed to the college mission and values. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect throughout the college community that is rooted in the Catholic mission and the colleges' work in a multicultural society. Roles and responsibilities are clear. College managers have had some success in raising standards of achievement amongst students. Most pass rates have improved over several years and many compare favourably with national averages. Overall retention rates at advanced level have improved, but in some courses at level 3 and level 2, the college has had less success in reversing the decline in rates. The achievement of students compared with their qualifications on entry has improved steadily over several years.

28. Since the last inspection, the strategic planning cycle has been revised and improved to promote closer links between planning objectives, the operational development plan and the action plans arising from course reviews and self-assessment activities. Staff contribute appropriately to the process at each stage. The grades for curriculum areas awarded in the inspection compare closely with those of the college self-assessment report.

29. Quality assurance procedures have improved since the last inspection. They are effective, in most curriculum areas, in raising standards and identifying further areas for attention. The implementation of action plans is now monitored. The development plan identifies areas for attention and addresses weaknesses, for example, the need to raise student retention rates at level 2. The programme of internal lesson observations is well established, but the outcomes do not contribute sufficiently to the promotion of good practice. The proportion of lesson observation

grades awarded for good and outstanding teaching was higher than that awarded by inspectors. Observation of tutorials has been introduced during 2001/02 as part of a pilot project with other colleges. The views of students are gathered from subject focus groups. Parents and staff are consulted on a regular basis.

30. Targets are set for each course for enrolment, retention and pass rates. In October each year, the outcomes are reviewed with the head of faculty against targets set; next year's targets are then agreed. Course leaders are involved in the process and the resulting action. Faculty heads and course leaders give close attention to retention and pass rates in the course review process. Examination reports compiled by heads of faculty are thorough and contain a detailed analysis of student performance and value added data. Targets are set for individual students based on their GCSE points scores on entry.

31. Quality assurance criteria are being developed for cross-college services that support the curriculum. These include students services, management information and IT services. Monitoring of these areas is carried out mainly through the self-assessment process. The college recognises the need to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness more thoroughly than at present.

32. The new management information system is used effectively to provide managers with a good range of reports. Retention data are generated on a monthly basis. In September 2001, electronic registration was installed to provide for improved monitoring of attendance. At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence that attendance had improved. Some difficulties remain to be overcome. For example, anticipated reports are not always available, which teaching staff find frustrating.

33. The management of the curriculum is generally good, in particular in English, social science, mathematics and visual and performing arts and media; there is effective teamwork and excellent sharing of good practice between these subjects. Staff at the college find that members of the management group are approachable. Since the last inspection communications have improved. The modified management structure allows a better two-way dialogue between staff and managers. The principal gives a weekly briefing. There is a news bulletin, and copies of minutes from meetings of the senior management group are circulated. There is a full staff meeting every half term and regular meetings at faculty and course level. The professional review for all staff is carried out thoroughly on an annual basis; it contributes to the planning of staff development activities. New teachers have mentors. There are effective procedures for dealing with complaints.

34. The governors have a good strategic overview of the college. Until December 2001, the Congregation of St Francis Xavier were the trustees of the college. At that time, the trusteeship passed to the Salford Diocese which has been very supportive. Governors have a good range of experience and form effective curriculum links within the college. For example, during autumn 2001, nine governors spent a day with students and staff in six faculty or subject areas. Staff found this gave governors better knowledge of the college and helped them to get to know the board members. Governors have played a helpful role in validating self-assessment curriculum reports. They review the college academic performance effectively, including the setting of targets. They receive timely reports from the principal and senior managers, but in some cases these parts contain insufficient commentary or visual display of data that could assist governors understanding of the college and development of their role.

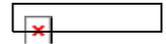
35. A number of new governors have been appointed, including a new student governor. The range of expertise has been extended with the appointment of members with experiences of business and HE. New governors receive appropriate induction. At a recent training day when all staff were considering the role and mission of the college, governors were well represented. The chair is well informed about educational developments and has a good working relationship with the principal and senior managers. Governors are aware of their roles.

36. The college's policy and practice on equal opportunities is an integral part of college life. The college has an inclusive approach to all aspects of its work and welcomes students from all faiths and a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Since the last inspection report, the college has extended the range of courses and the levels at which they can be studied, but some gaps in provision remain in

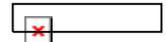
courses at level 2. In many subjects, for example English and sociology, teachers display good judgement in their choice of appropriate teaching methods and materials. Their approach in lessons helps students to learn effectively regardless of their differing levels of prior achievement and differing backgrounds. In only a few subjects are students confined by teachers poorly chosen materials or use in lessons of unnecessarily complicated language. There is little monitoring of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy and in some aspects, such as the monitoring of applications for employment at the college, procedures, which are common practice elsewhere, have only recently been implemented.

37. The college is in a secure financial position and has significant reserves. Value for money is attained through efficient deployment of resources including staff and accommodation. The new building and the upgrading of college accommodation have been well managed and have enhanced provision. Classrooms are used efficiently. Occupancy levels are good although, in a few cases, rooms are too small to accommodate the classes timetabled in them. During the inspection the average class size was approximately 13.

### Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



#### Science



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

#### **Strengths**

- much good teaching
- good opportunities for off-site work
- effective use of assessment in matching teaching to students' capabilities
- good pass rates on GCE AS courses in 2001.

#### **Weaknesses**

- narrow range of learning opportunities in some lessons

- low retention rate for first-year students in biology and physics in 2001/02.

### **Scope of provision**

38. The college provides GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics and GCE AS in environmental science. A GCSE science course (single award) is also offered. There is no vocational provision. At the time of the inspection, there were 121 students studying GCE AS biology and 83 studying GCE A level. In chemistry, there were 103 students studying GCE AS chemistry and 62 studying GCE A level, and in physics the numbers were 60 and 36, respectively. There were 28 students studying GCE AS environmental science and 50 students studying GCSE science (single award).

### **Achievement and standards**

39. Pass rates for GCE A-level biology and physics were similar to national averages for each of the three years from 1999, and for GCE A-level chemistry for two out of those three years. The pass rates for GCE AS in 2001 were good. The attainments of first-year students in their GCE AS modules in 2001/02 were also good. Many students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, especially in biology. The retention rate for all three GCE A-level subjects fell in 2001, when compared with 2000. In GCE A-level chemistry and physics, the retention rates in 2001 were similar to the national averages, but in biology the rate was lower than the national average. The retention rate on current GCE AS courses in biology and physics is low.

40. The standards achieved by students in lessons are good. In GCE A-level biology, students showed incisive lateral thinking, for example, about nano-metre gaps in membranes in relation to transmission of the AIDS virus. In chemistry, GCE AS students made perceptive deductions about sources of error in experiments on rates of organic reactions. In GCE AS environmental science, students were confident and perceptive in identifying the advantages, disadvantages and practical difficulties of different pyramid representations from food chains.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 1999 to 2001**

| Qualification         | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCE A-level biology   | 3     | No. of starts    | 117  | 104  | 104  |
|                       |       | % retention      | 85   | 90   | 75   |
|                       |       | % pass rate      | 85   | 84   | 87   |
| GCE A-level chemistry | 3     | No. of starts    | 77   | 88   | 62   |
|                       |       | % retention      | 92   | 89   | 81   |
|                       |       | % pass rate      | 87   | 77   | 88   |
| GCE A-level physics   | 3     | No. of starts    | 61   | 46   | 37   |
|                       |       | % retention      | 85   | 80   | 78   |
|                       |       | % pass rate      | 94   | 86   | 86   |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

### **Quality of education and training**

41. Much of the teaching of science is good and often very good, particularly in chemistry and

environmental science. The most effective teaching is characterised by cogent exposition that demonstrates excellent subject knowledge, and close attention to meeting individual student needs throughout each lesson. In all lessons, there is a good rapport between students and teachers. Students are very diligent in their learning and appreciate the well-prepared lessons. They are particularly well motivated where teachers communicate a contagious enthusiasm and involve them in stimulating discussion and other activities, such as practical work, that increase their understanding. For example, in a GCE AS biology lesson, students showed competence in practical work and developed very good understanding of the shearing of DNA that would occur if homogenisation were used in its extraction from kiwi fruit.

42. Teachers provide students with prepared outline notes that give comprehensive and thorough coverage of examination specifications. An appropriate range of well-conceived practical work is enhanced by thorough discussion of planning considerations and of possible refinements. Learning is enhanced by fieldwork and other appropriate opportunities offsite. Sufficient textbooks are available and the department's study facility gives good access to scientific literature and other in-house material. Students are also well supported when seeking help with their work from teachers.

43. Whilst the notes that teachers have prepared are useful to students, they reflect a degree of uniformity of approach and offer a narrow range of learning opportunities in some lessons, particularly in physics and biology. Students make less use of a range of textbooks than is usual when studying at this level. They are not always sufficiently challenged to build-up their independent learning skills in preparation for the next stages in their education. Occasionally, teachers' close adherence to their prepared notes makes it difficult for them to make appropriate demands on the most able, while meeting the needs of the less able.

44. All students are given target grades to aim for based on prior attainment at GCSE. Value added data is used effectively to track progress. Coursework is appropriate and the procedures for the grading of it are robust. Common marking schemes are used and all awarding body requirements are met. Tasks set in class and for homework are checked or marked and followed up appropriately. In the best lessons, teachers carefully monitored students' responses and used their knowledge of individual abilities to pitch challenging questions to individuals at a level appropriate to their needs. At advanced level, all teachers made good use of assessment data in planning lessons to meet the needs of all students. The written action plans resulting from progress reviews lacked sufficient detail to be of benefit to students, but verbal feedback to students was good.

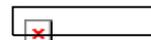
45. Pre-course advice and guidance is generally satisfactory. However, students with low attainment profiles at GCSE are accepted on to GCE AS and A levels. Retention rates in GCE AS physics and biology were poor during 2001/02. It was good for GGCE AS chemistry. Teachers provide additional help for students at drop-in sessions and students with dyslexia are supported sensitively. Monitoring and follow up of absence and late arrival at lessons are unsatisfactory.

46. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have a good knowledge of their subjects. Accommodation and resources for practical work are good in chemistry and adequate elsewhere. The department is well supported by three technicians.

### ***Leadership and management***

47. The department is well led. There is effective management of the department and of each subject within it. Teachers across the different subjects function well as a team. There is consistent whole-department policy and practice in most areas of work. Lesson observation is effective in monitoring the quality of teaching, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice. Students make good use of the department's IT facility to access relevant Internet sites and use subject-specific software, such as that including an animation of the cardiac cycle.

## **Mathematics**



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

### ***Strengths***

- good course management and organisation
- effective teaching and learning
- good monitoring and assessment of students' progress
- wide range of course options
- good support for individual students
- very good achievement on GCE A-level further mathematics.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates on GCE AS in 2001
- insufficient use of IT
- inappropriate accommodation for some classes.

### ***Scope of provision***

48. The mathematics department offers a good range of courses. The implementation of Curriculum 2000 has led to a choice of GCE AS courses based on modules in pure, discrete and further mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The second-year, GCE A-level courses provide opportunities for further progression. At the time of the inspection, there were 190 students taking GCE AS courses and 79 on GCE A-level courses. Some 38 GCE AS students who needed extra support attended an additional foundation for advanced mathematics course. The Open College Network (OCN) course, progress in mathematics, has been successfully introduced as an

alternative to the GCSE course for those without a grade C at GCSE. The GCSE and OCN mathematics courses provide some 101 students with an opportunity to improve their attainment at this level each year.

### **Achievement and standards**

49. The pass rates on most courses are satisfactory. In GCE A-level further mathematics there has been a 100% pass rate in two of the past three years, 1999 to 2001. In GCE A-level mathematics, pass rates have remained slightly above the national averages for the same period, but high grades are below the national average. The pass rate on the new GCE AS course in 2001, at 59%, was low. At level 2, the pass rate in GCSE was 43%, similar to the national average. Most students who complete level 2 courses improve by the equivalent of at least one grade at GCSE, which for many reflects good progress. Retention rates on most courses are generally at, or slightly above, the national averages. In GCE A-level mathematics, the rate has declined and was slightly below the national average for 2001. Value added data show that, at GCE A level, most students' achievements are in line with expectations, given their prior attainment at GCSE. There is good development of mathematical skills on most courses, although some students make slow progress in class. Students' progression to HE is good. Some 82% of students who completed a GCE A-level mathematics course in 2001 went to university, of whom 17% took mathematics-related degrees. Attendance at lessons is normally good.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 1999 to 2001**

| Qualification                     | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCSE mathematics                  | 2     | No. of starts    | 152  | 146  | 74   |
|                                   |       | % retention      | 81   | 69   | 81   |
|                                   |       | % pass rate      | 36   | 49   | 43   |
| GCE A-level mathematics (2 years) | 3     | No. of starts    | 126  | 90   | 113  |
|                                   |       | % retention      | 80   | 88   | 78   |
|                                   |       | % pass rate      | 90   | 91   | 92   |
| GCE A-level further mathematics   | 3     | No. of starts    | 7    | 18   | 7    |
|                                   |       | % retention      | 100  | 83   | 86   |
|                                   |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 80   | 100  |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

### **Quality of education and training**

50. Teaching was good or better in most of the observed lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. However, no lessons were judged as outstanding. Teachers rarely inspire students and some teaching lacks imagination. The most effective lessons had been carefully planned and teachers used well-designed teaching materials. In these lessons, teachers carefully explained the aims of the lesson to students at the start and subsequently checked that these aims had been achieved. They ensured that their lessons were pitched at an appropriate level and set students suitably demanding tasks that took account of their particular abilities. Students in a GCE AS class were well motivated and used knowledge that had been acquired a short time before to tackle a linear programming problem. Most students were able to analyse complex questions, create linear equations, complete calculation tables and find a solution from drawing graphs. The teacher moved continuously around the group encouraging and challenging students' analysis. In GCE AS statistics, there is a strong emphasis on developing skills for solving network problems. In mechanics, the study of theory is well supported by practical experiment ensuring students develop a good conceptual understanding. At GCE A level, work builds well on the GCE AS modules.

Further mathematics students show good understanding of sampling techniques used in statistics and are able to recall and apply complex functions.

51. There were a few less effective lessons where teachers failed to meet the needs of students of different abilities. Some students were not being sufficiently challenged and others were waiting for the teacher to provide the solution for them. In one GCSE lesson, students were required to solve complicated simultaneous equations. Although it was evident that many students did not understand how to subtract negative numbers or how to substitute a number into an equation, the teacher gave out the set homework and ended the lesson. In some instances, students lacked the basic algebraic skills to be able to solve the problems they had been set. In a GCE A-level revision lesson some students had difficulty in remembering some fundamental aspects of pure mathematics. There is limited use of IT in teaching and learning, although some specialist mathematical software is available to support investigative work.

52. Students' work is regularly marked and carefully assessed. The department has a homework policy, and uses a series of standard pieces of coursework, homework and end of unit assessments to monitor individual students' progress. There are good standard marking schemes for set pieces of work, but there is no cross-marking or moderation between teachers. Marking is generally thorough and teachers correct mistakes and add useful comments to help students to improve. Students who need additional help can attend a weekly maths workshop. The attendance at these lessons is usually good. For GCE A-level students a target minimum grade is agreed at the start of their course. Progress reviews with subject teachers take place three times a year. The process is thorough, but the agreed actions are often not sufficiently focused. Contact with parents is good; they receive two reports a year. Many attend a parents evening once a year.

53. Teaching resources for mathematics are satisfactory. Classrooms are well equipped and each has a computer linked to the college network. There is a good range of mathematical games and learning aids. All students are provided with appropriate textbooks. There is good range of mathematics books and periodicals in the library. The college's intranet has a mathematics site, but it is underdeveloped. The revision CD-ROMs available in the library and the discrete maths software in classrooms are not an integral part of the teaching programme. Teaching accommodation is mostly satisfactory, but the rooms located in a different building away from the main suite of mathematics rooms are too small for the size of some classes. The mathematics area lacks a clear sense of identity. In teaching rooms, there are good displays of mathematics posters and, in the corridor, pictures and pen portraits of famous mathematicians. All teachers are full time, experienced and well qualified. Opportunities for staff development are good. There have been some whole-team training lessons.

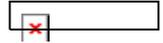
54. Teachers provide good support for students. They give generously of their time both inside and outside the classroom and students speak highly of the help and encouragement they receive. Student handbooks for each subject are informative and well written. All subjects have a well-designed, three-week induction period at the start of the year. It is college policy to accept students for advanced level courses who have at least a GCSE grade C at intermediate level. For the past three years from 1999, a significant number of students have transferred out of GCE A-level mathematics late in the first year. Only a few students receive learning support, either through self-referral or by teacher referral. Most students who are referred attend their support lessons and tutors receive feedback on progress. Students have good opportunities for enrichment activities including a 'code-cracking' event and the opportunity to take part in the 'National Mathematics Challenge'.

### ***Leadership and management***

55. The department is well managed and teachers work well as a team. Courses are very well organised and effectively co-ordinated. Different team members are allocated appropriate responsibilities. The monitoring and reviewing of schemes of work and standardisation of teaching materials are good. There are minuted team meetings twice every term; required actions are recorded, but not always reviewed at the next meeting. Communication is good, but mostly informal; teachers regularly discuss mathematics issues. Teachers are observed teaching by the head of faculty, and by their peers. The lesson observation grades awarded were higher than those given by

inspectors. Good practice is not always shared effectively and there is generally a lack of imaginative ideas about teaching. Course reviews are effective; all teachers were involved in writing the self-assessment report. Actions arising from the report are carefully monitored; there are clear examples of improvements that result from the actions. Most courses achieve their annual targets.

## **Business**



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates on most business and economics courses
- well-planned programmes
- good, topical learning materials
- thorough assessment and monitoring of students' progress.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on GNVQ advanced programme
- unsatisfactory attendance and significant lateness to lessons
- insufficient use of external business links.

### ***Scope of provision***

56. The faculty of business provides courses in GCE AS and GCE A-level business studies and economics, together with vocational business programmes at intermediate and advanced level. Work experience is provided for students on vocational programmes. A new GCE AS accounting course was successfully introduced in September 2001. The GCSE business studies course has been dropped due to low recruitment and declining achievements. Level 1 provision in business is offered to a small number of students within a different faculty. Few additional, business-related

qualifications are offered, for example, integrated business technology or computerised accounts. At the time of the inspection, student numbers were buoyant or at least growing on most courses, but had declined significantly on the GNVQ intermediate programme. Some 41 students started the course in September 2000, but only 27 enrolled at the beginning of the academic year 2001/02.

### **Achievement and standards**

57. Pass rates on most business and economics courses are high. For example, the pass rate for GCE A-level economics has averaged over 95% during the three years from 1999; the GNVQ intermediate pass rate is significantly above national averages for sixth form colleges. Data for the GNVQ advanced programme show students achieving outcomes significantly better than predicted from their prior GCSE achievements. The retention rate is close to national averages for most courses. However, for the GNVQ advanced programme it is poor at less than 60% in two out of the last three years.

58. The standards reached by students in lessons are generally appropriate to their level of study. Students in economics used theoretical models confidently during discussions about the performance of different economic systems. In GCE A-level business studies, standards were commensurate with pass rather than higher grades. Assignment work in vocational business programmes demonstrated good evidence of research and the analysis of different forms of data. Students do not make sufficient use of IT in their work. Attendance in the lessons observed was unsatisfactory, at 77%, although faculty records show it is normally higher. In addition, persistent lateness by a significant number of students disrupted learning.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in business, 1999 to 2001**

| Qualification                      | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GNVQ intermediate business studies | 2     | No. of starts    | 25   | 40   | 41   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 92   | 88   | 78   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 88   | 90   |
| GNVQ advanced business studies     | 3     | No. of starts    | 22   | 34   | 24   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 59   | 85   | 54   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 89   | 100  |
| GCE A-level business studies       | 3     | No. of starts    | 112  | 80   | 98   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 80   | 81   | 80   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 88   | 95   | 90   |
| GCE A-level economics              | 3     | No. of starts    | 27   | 15   | 24   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 81   | 80   | 79   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 95   | 100  | 95   |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

### **Quality of education and training**

59. Most teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned and learning programmes are supported by appropriately detailed schemes of work that include opportunities for using and developing key skills. The quality of the learning materials used in lessons is of a high standard and often linked to examples of current business practice. In many cases, extension tasks are provided for the topics under discussion, which help to improve knowledge and deepen understanding. Frequent use is made of past examination questions to ensure appropriate standards of performance are reached. In the most effective lessons a suitable variety of teaching methods is used including simulations

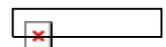
and business case studies. Students are regularly questioned by teachers to assess their understanding of relevant business concepts and topics. For example, in an AVCE lesson on customer service, students were presented with scenarios of good and bad service which led to a lively discussion in which students were encouraged to contribute from their own experiences on part-time jobs or as consumers. As a result, and with appropriate guidance from the teacher, they were able to appreciate the importance of good customer service. The few less effective lessons were characterised by excessive copying of notes, too much teacher exposition, or practical activities that were novel, but unsuccessful in developing learning. The marking of students' work is usually thorough. On the GNVQ intermediate course, in particular, students are given detailed feedback to help them improve their work.

60. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced; they benefit from regular opportunities for professional development. The attractive specialist accommodation provides a good atmosphere with good-sized teaching rooms and relevant wall displays. The faculty has a dedicated resources room for students, and access to IT and the Internet. ICT facilities have improved significantly since the last inspection; more learning materials are now available on the faculty intranet site. Library resources are good; a press-cuttings service is available, and the book stock is extensive and up to date. Assessment is well planned and effectively linked to awarding body standards. There is thorough standardisation of marking for both GNVQ and AVCE assignments. Guidance and support are effective. There are regular reviews of students' progress. However, inadequate space on the review instrument constrains tutor comments on action planning. Students appreciate the weekly 'drop-in' workshop provided by teachers for those who require additional support in their vocational or academic studies.

### ***Leadership and management***

61. The business faculty is located in its own designated building and includes a common staff room, which helps to foster good internal communications. Although faculty meetings are held formally twice a term, course or subject team meetings are largely informal and few documented minutes are produced. The latest draft self-assessment report, produced by the new head of faculty, is thorough and provides an effective review of curriculum provision; good use is made of management information to analyse students' achievements. The previous year's report is less thorough. The faculty recognises that contacts with local businesses are not sufficiently well developed and is responding to the concerns of student focus groups by planning an extension of external links.

### **Computing and information technology**



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

#### ***Strengths***

- high pass rates in GCE A-level computing and GCE AS ICT
- good student coursework and projects
- production of very good learning material by teachers

- good support for individual students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- low pass rates in GCSE IT
- poor retention rates on GCE A-level IT
- some indifferent teaching in a significant number of lessons
- students' poor attendance record and late arrival at lessons
- lack of suitable vocational provision for students at levels 1 and 2.

### ***Scope of provision***

62. The college offers both computing and ICT at GCE AS and A level. At the time of the inspection, there were 277 students on these programmes. A further 51 students were taking the AVCE course in IT and approximately 40 had begun GCSE IT.

### ***Achievement and standards***

63. In GCE A-level computing, pass rates over the three years from 1999 have been significantly above the national average. Many students have achieved higher grades than would be expected given their prior attainment. The percentage of students achieving high grades has also been substantially above the national average. More than 50% of computing students at the college have progressed to degree courses in computing or IT. The pass rates in GCSE IT fell significantly below the national average in 2001, while, in both 1999 and 2001, the retention rate in GCE A-level IT was below the national average.

64. Project work seen during the inspection was at an appropriate level. A number of students produced work of a very high standard. Students in GCE A-level computing, for example, were working on an advanced database project, several of them addressing the topic through the use of a programming language (Delphi) in which they displayed impressive powers of logical thought and programming skill.

65. Some of the best student projects in GCE AS IT used Microsoft Excel to very good effect - linking complex sets of worksheets using macro procedures in Visual Basic, and making excellent use of graphical design, as well as programming skills, in the presentation of the projects.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in computing and information technology, 1999 to 2001***

| Qualification            | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|--------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCSE information systems | 2     | No. of starts    | *    | 41   | 44   |
|                          |       | % retention      | *    | 70   | 74   |
|                          |       | % pass rate      | *    | 57   | 28   |
| GCE A-level IT           | 3     | No. of starts    | 70   | 91   | 99   |
|                          |       | % retention      | 70   | 80   | 60   |
|                          |       | % pass rate      | 97   | 92   | 88   |
| GCE A-level computing    | 3     | No. of starts    | 36   | 51   | 56   |
|                          |       | % retention      | 74   | 85   | 82   |
|                          |       | % pass rate      | 91   | 90   | 94   |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

\* course did not run

***Quality of education and training***

66. In most lessons observed in computing or IT, teaching was satisfactory or better, and in all computing lessons, good or better. In the most effective lessons, teachers successfully engender in students the enthusiasm that they themselves have for the subject. Teachers make good use of their skills and prepare lessons thoroughly. Lessons are purposeful, there is close attention to the needs of individuals. Teachers know when to intervene, either with individuals or with the whole class, while skilful questioning and encouragement help the students to find their own solutions. In one computing class, for example, a problem involving the creation of a formula to convert numerical marks to grades through the use of a look-up table allowed the students and teacher to work together to find an elegant solution. The outcome helped students to understand the difference between relative and absolute values in spreadsheet formulae. In another lesson, students demonstrated competence using Microsoft access to manipulate data in a scenario designed around the production of a lending system for a games and video library.

67. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not hold the attention of all students. Questions were directed at students, but they were not given sufficient time to think or respond. Some students were able to remain completely unresponsive and contribute nothing to discussion. In a significant number of lessons where students were working on coursework, good individual advice was given to some students, but the remainder of the group received little teacher attention and many students did not use their time productively.

68. There were poor records of punctuality in all lessons; some students arrived up to 20 minutes after the start of the lesson. Attendance was below the college average. Adherence to deadlines for completion and submission of homework and coursework is unsatisfactory. In two lessons only two students had handed in homework by the deadline.

69. Very good materials have been produced in-house for all courses and are used consistently by all staff. They include colour-coded checklists for each section of project work, which helps students to confirm that they have included all necessary evidence, and for staff to track anything that might be missing from an individual project. Students in an introductory class on key IT application programs quickly grasped the core of what they were learning. They were helped by extremely well-conceived material which teachers had prepared in advance on the college network and which helped students to make rapid progress. The progress of individual students is carefully recorded by all staff. Copies of handbooks, notes, project guidance, mark schemes and useful templates are

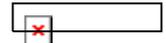
available for students on the network. Students speak highly of their teachers, and particularly appreciate the extra lessons offered and support given by staff out of scheduled lesson time. However, some students who would benefit from additional support outside the curriculum area are not identified, and do not receive support.

70. Most staff are well qualified and a number have industrial experience. There are well-furnished facilities for IT, which offer space for theory work and class activity away from the computers. Students have personal e-mail addresses and storage space on the network: there is good access to technician support. Library stock is up to date and there is good liaison between library staff and teachers, which ensures that students can make effective use of the computerised library system to identify relevant books for their topics.

### ***Leadership and management***

71. The department is well managed and curriculum planning is of a high order. Lines of accountability for staff with cross-college responsibilities are not clear. The department makes good use of its training budget to secure skills needed for further development. Sound development planning and self-assessment contribute to coherence in departmental work and to effective forward planning.

## **Visual and performing arts and media**



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

### ***Strengths***

- outstanding pass rates on most courses
- good teaching in media
- good practical work and disciplined independent learning
- effective one-to-one support in all subjects
- excellent accommodation for art and media
- effective management at course level

- outstanding sharing of good practice and collaboration across subjects
- high proportion of high grades in most subjects.

### **Weaknesses**

- late arrival of students at some media lessons
- some poor accommodation in drama and music.

### **Scope of provision**

72. At the time of the inspection, approximately 460 students were studying on visual, performing arts and media courses. GCE AS and A-level courses are provided in art and design, media studies, music, and drama. The AVCE is offered in art and design as a single or double award.

### **Achievement and standards**

73. Student achievement is very good across all subjects. There are outstanding pass rates on most courses. GCE A-level media and music performance have achieved consistently high pass rates: 100% in media over the two years from 2000 and 100% in music over the three years to 2001. New GCE AS qualifications in art and design, drama, media and music have also achieved high pass rates in 2001, again with 100% in media and music. The proportion of high grades in most subjects is significantly above national averages; all music students achieved high grades in 1999 and 2000. Advanced GNVQ art and design was also significantly above the national average for high grades. Retention rates, on the whole, are good with only advanced GNVQ art and design and music performance falling below national averages in 2000/01.

74. Practical work is of a very high standard across all courses; disciplined learning allows students to work well on their own. In drama, students demonstrate good technique and performance skills in rehearsal for their practical examinations. Working on a variety of texts, their performance was focused and many of the characters were well developed and observed. The groups worked co-operatively and effectively even when left on their own to rehearse. Evaluation of students' work is a structured part of lessons in all subjects. Most art and design students have well-developed research and study skills and produce imaginative and expressive work in their visual diaries. Much good work comes from primary sources and the introduction of life drawing has greatly influenced and inspired a large number of students.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 1999 to 2001**

| Qualification       | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|---------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GNVQ art and design | 2     | No. of starts    | 8    | 17   | 16   |
|                     |       | % retention      | 38   | 76   | 63   |

|                               |   |               |     |     |     |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
|                               |   | % pass rate   | 100 | 83  | 100 |
| GCE A-level music performance | 3 | No. of starts | 11  | 7   | 13  |
|                               |   | % retention   | 91  | 86  | 69  |
|                               |   | % pass rate   | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| GCE A-level drama             | 3 | No. of starts | *   | 36  | 62  |
|                               |   | % retention   | *   | 100 | 81  |
|                               |   | % pass rate   | *   | 100 | 98  |
| GCE A-level media             | 3 | No. of starts | 38  | 57  | 61  |
|                               |   | % retention   | 74  | 77  | 80  |
|                               |   | % pass rate   | 93  | 100 | 100 |
| GCE A-level arts studies      | 3 | No. of starts | 64  | 67  | 72  |
|                               |   | % retention   | 88  | 81  | 89  |
|                               |   | % pass rate   | 95  | 89  | 96  |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

\* course was not offered

### **Quality of education and training**

75. Much of the teaching is very good. There is some excellent teaching in media and drama. In these lessons, the teacher was dynamic and enthusiastic, moving the learning forward with a momentum that challenged students to achieve their potential. The students responded positively to this approach. In a media lesson, introducing them to new media technologies, students were enthusiastic and were able to give examples, which drew upon their existing knowledge and a range of sources. A drama rehearsal of *The Comedians* was well directed. The development of the students' characterisations showed commitment both vocally and physically, and motivations were clear in relation to other characters, the text and the subtext. In art and design, teachers use a good knowledge of the history of art to extend students' understanding of the traditions in which their own work is located. Teachers plan courses carefully. Comprehensive schemes of work cover the syllabus and address student needs. Students are given stimulating assignments that encourage them to develop new skills and understanding. For example, in AVCE art and design, students have been commissioned to produce a piece of public art for the college as part of their 'art in the community' module. Students responded with enthusiasm as they considered the practicalities of the possible locations and began to negotiate with other curriculum staff regarding the form their ideas might take.

76. Most students are fully committed to their work, although learning is at times disrupted by students' late arrival at lessons. This lateness was a feature of three of the four media classes observed. In one of the drama rehearsals, poor attendance adversely affected the learning of the other students in the group. Many students are articulate and show pride and critical awareness when describing their work. Several choose to continue working in classrooms and studios outside class hours. Access to facilities and staff expertise contribute to an ethos in which independent learning is encouraged.

77. Teachers make good use of educational visits, and links with local practitioners. In music, master classes are funded through the excellence challenge for students across the college. These have included a Klezmer workshop, and flute, saxophone and choral master classes.

78. The college has recently invested substantially in upgrading the accommodation for art and design. The new art studios provide excellent workspaces; they are light and airy, and contain stimulating displays of students' work. Media rooms are also of a very high standard, well resourced

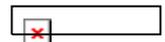
and include the digital-editing suite, which has 14 Apple Macs. However, some of the accommodation for drama and music is poor. The drama studio floor is in need of refurbishment or replacement. In addition, the acoustic quality of the drama studio adversely affects students' performance. Music studios are small, even for the relatively low numbers involved. Dividing students up between the suite of music rooms creates stimulating opportunities for the curriculum but introduces difficulties in monitoring progress and providing individual support. Music rooms are not soundproofed and there is significant extraneous noise.

79. Students recognise and value the support they receive from staff. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve further. Teachers are willing to give of their own time to help students. In music, a series of additional one-to-one workshops provides support to students who are experiencing difficulties. In drama, staff and students worked over the Easter holidays in 2002 to prepare for the forthcoming practical examinations. Close in-class monitoring of students' progress is a strong feature of all teaching.

### ***Leadership and management***

80. There is effective management at course level. The curriculum area has a clear creative and artistic identity to which all staff and students subscribe. There is a high level of team integrity across the area and many outstanding examples of sharing of good practice and collaboration across the different subjects. These strengths result in a holistic approach to teaching and learning for both students and staff as was demonstrated at the end-of-term college production of *Guys and Dolls* for students, and the end of year performance by staff. In addition, media students film and edit video footage for the music concerts, art students design and create backdrops for drama productions, and drama students act in media projects. This co-operation is achieved through staff working together as a whole team as well as at individual course level. Regular team meetings ensure key issues are addressed. All staff take part and contribute to the quality assurance processes, including self-assessment, student progress monitoring, course review and evaluation and target setting.

### **Humanities**



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

#### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on GCE AS courses in 2001
- good teaching in classical civilisation and geography
- high standard of students' work in classical civilisation
- good support for students outside lessons.

### **Weaknesses**

- declining pass rate in GCE A-level history
- low and declining proportion of high grades at GCE A level
- insufficient opportunities for extended writing
- some unsatisfactory marking
- insufficiently demanding work for the more able students in most subjects.

### **Scope of provision**

81. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in law, history, geography and classical civilisation. Enrolments have increased since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. At the time of the inspection, approximately 150 students were studying law, the largest humanities subject, and 30 were taking classical civilisation, the smallest subject.

### **Achievement and standards**

82. Overall pass rates in humanities are satisfactory. Results are broadly in line with national averages. The exception is history, where pass rates declined to 53% in the GCE A level in 2001. The proportion of students achieving high grades is below national averages, and has declined in recent years, particularly in law. In history, students achieve lower grades than are expected of them, given their prior attainment at GCSE level. The GCE AS results in 2001 were very good in classical civilisation, geography and history, and satisfactory in law. In this new qualification, preliminary data show that students are making significant progress compared to their prior attainment. Most students who commence courses in humanities complete them successfully, although retention rates declined significantly in law in 2001.

83. The standard of students' work is very good in classical civilisation. Students can discuss the work of Aristophanes and Aeschylus confidently, showing good knowledge of the plays and a critical appreciation of both plot and character. Students ask intelligent questions, and demonstrate a curiosity and desire to extend their knowledge and understanding.

84. The standard of students' work was good in geography and satisfactory in law and history. Students demonstrated a sound basic knowledge of the subjects. In geography, students showed a sound awareness of the issues surrounding sustainable development. In law and history, students' knowledge was satisfactory. However, in all these subjects the more able students are not challenged sufficiently to think for themselves or to articulate their knowledge and ideas beyond a superficial level.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 1999 to 2001**

| Qualification                      | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCE A-level geography              | 3     | No. of starts    | 37   | 23   | 23   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 76   | 91   | 91   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 94   | 89   |
| GCE A-level history                | 3     | No. of starts    | 31   | 36   | 64   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 81   | 75   | 81   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 92   | 81   | 53   |
| GCE A-level law                    | 3     | No. of starts    | 45   | 60   | 43   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 71   | 75   | 65   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 100  | 84   | 88   |
| GCE A-level classical civilisation | 3     | No. of starts    | 21   | 31   | 27   |
|                                    |       | % retention      | 71   | 90   | 67   |
|                                    |       | % pass rate      | 86   | 77   | 88   |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

### **Quality of education and training**

85. Most teaching in humanities was satisfactory. In classical civilisation and geography, the two smaller subjects, it was good. In classical civilisation, students developed a genuine interest in the plays of Aristophanes, Euripides and Aeschylus. In one session, students had a stimulating and knowledgeable discussion on the relative merits of Aristophanes' *Knights*, *Wasps* and *Peace*. The teacher successfully emphasised the relevance of Greek literature to modern life, drawing appropriate parallels that brought the subject alive for students.

86. Geography teaching was good. Lessons were well planned, well organised, and purposeful. Students' knowledge and understanding was constantly tested and consolidated through effective question and answer sessions. An appropriate variety of classroom activities held students' attention. In a lesson focusing on a case study in preparation for the synoptic module of the GCE A-level examination, students were able to evaluate a range of development projects using appropriate geographical knowledge. Teaching in both law and history was satisfactory, although rather dull. In these subjects, an inadequate range of teaching techniques was used, and question and answer sessions were limited to expectations of brief, undeveloped answers from students. Students were sometimes given too long to complete basic tasks in lessons, and were not challenged or stimulated. In a law lesson, recent cases on the 'right to die' and on sexual deviancy were used to explore the interface between law, morality and public policy. Despite the interesting subject matter, students were overly passive. The layout of the classroom inhibited discussion, and the teaching failed to arouse students' curiosity.

87. In history, lessons failed to enthuse or engage many students. In a session focusing on differing historical interpretations of Hitler as a leader, students acquired a basic grasp of the subject matter. However, they were not expected to be able to articulate their understanding in any depth. Many were bored. Students worked more effectively when given tasks. In most humanities lessons, there was a focus on ensuring that students developed the skills and techniques that would help them to succeed in exams. Teachers showed an awareness of the assessment criteria that students needed to meet, and transmitted the knowledge to students. However, insufficient demands are made on the more able students in most humanities lessons. They are not encouraged to think for themselves or challenged to develop either their oral or written answers in sufficient depth and detail. As a result, able students are not acquiring those higher-level critical and evaluative skills of which they are capable.

88. Students are set regular work in most subjects. However, much of the work set consists of brief tasks involving reading or writing that do not extend students. Students spend insufficient time studying outside the classroom. In most subjects, they are not given enough practice in extended writing. Marking is often cursory. Comments give insufficient indication to students of what they need to do to improve their work. Some students' work is not marked, particularly in history.

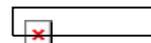
89. Resources in humanities are satisfactory. Staff are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. The quality of most learning materials is good. In history, well-designed handouts enabled students to understand the differences between fascism, communism and democracy. Law handouts covered a comprehensive range of case law. However, an inadequate range of teaching resources is used in most lessons. Stocks of textbooks are adequate. The use of ICT in teaching and learning is underdeveloped. Most classrooms have interesting displays to stimulate students' interest. The geography base is particularly well decorated.

90. Teachers give freely of their time to support students outside lessons and additional lessons are available to students who are having difficulties. Students are very appreciative of the care and concern shown by their teachers.

### ***Leadership and management***

91. The management of humanities provision is satisfactory. Law is based in a separate faculty. Formal and informal arrangements have developed a strong team spirit amongst humanities staff. The curriculum is managed effectively by course leaders. Quality assurance systems designed to raise standards are only partly effective. In some subjects, teaching and learning are not evaluated sufficiently critically. As a consequence, plans to improve students' achievements are undeveloped.

## **Social sciences**



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

### ***Strengths***

- high GCE A-level pass rates in psychology and sociology
- very good teaching
- good learning materials
- very good support and monitoring of individual students
- effective management of classroom discussions

- strong leadership and management.

### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology
- low pass rates in GCE A-level government and politics
- low pass rates in GCE AS psychology in 2001.

### **Scope of provision**

92. The college offers courses in GCE AS and A-level psychology, sociology and government and politics, and GCSE in sociology. At the time of the inspection, these courses were being studied by over 500 full-time students aged 16 to 18.

### **Achievement and standards**

93. Pass rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology have been very good for the three years to 2001. The proportion of students gaining high grades was also high for both subjects in 2001. In psychology, many students achieved higher grades than would have been expected from their attainment at GCSE. The pass rate for GCE A-level government and politics was low in 1999 and 2000. It improved in 2001, but remained below the national average. In 2001, pass rates were very good in GCE AS sociology and government and politics, but poor in psychology. The A\* to C pass rate for GCSE sociology is very good. Retention rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology are generally below national averages. The standard of most students' written work is good. High grades are often achieved for externally assessed coursework. Students have well-developed oral skills and show good knowledge and understanding. Progression to HE and employment is good.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences, 1999 to 2001**

| <b>Qualification</b>                | <b>Level</b> | <b>Completion year:</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GCE A-level psychology              | 3            | No. of starts           | 126         | 119         | 145         |
|                                     |              | % retention             | 78          | 70          | 70          |
|                                     |              | % pass rate             | 99          | 92          | 98          |
| GCE A-level sociology               | 3            | No. of starts           | 48          | 40          | 46          |
|                                     |              | % retention             | 65          | 75          | 70          |
|                                     |              | % pass rate             | 94          | 90          | 97          |
| GCE A-level government and politics | 3            | No. of starts           | 35          | 32          | 24          |
|                                     |              | % retention             | 80          | 88          | 83          |

|  |  |             |    |    |    |
|--|--|-------------|----|----|----|
|  |  | % pass rate | 78 | 69 | 85 |
|--|--|-------------|----|----|----|

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

### **Quality of education and training**

94. Most teaching was good or better. The most successful lessons were clearly planned, and teachers more effective in encouraging students to draw on previous learning. In a GCE AS psychology lesson, class members were each asked a question to test their knowledge, and answers were recorded on the whiteboard against learning objectives. Teaching styles are appropriately varied and maintain students' interest. In a politics lesson, two Internet-search activities provided information for a class discussion on the legislation concerning the changes in the composition of the House of Lords. In a GCE AS sociology lesson on mass culture, analysis of video and book material was accompanied by note taking, reading, discussion and working in pairs. Students' grasp of abstract, theoretical issues was very good in a GCE A-level psychology lesson where contrasting treatments for depression were discussed.

95. The needs of students of different ability levels are met through carefully designed group work and classroom tasks. Students have good working relationships with their teachers and receive effective help from them individually. Students with additional learning support needs are identified quickly. In a government and politics lesson, one student with difficulties with concentration was given specific help in a sensitive manner.

96. In sociology and psychology, students benefit from excellent learning materials which include induction literature with clear guidance on how to succeed on the courses, and other materials such as reference lists of essential skills, key terms and the content of modules. Materials are produced to a high standard and excellently organised.

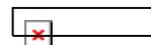
97. All subject staff are well qualified. Classrooms for psychology and sociology have been well refurbished since the last inspection. Teachers have produced good displays that create a positive departmental image. Some rooms are only just adequate in size for the numbers of students present in classes. Access to ICT is inadequate within the social sciences faculty. Schemes of work indicate that Internet-search activities are used where appropriate. Much relevant additional study material is available in the library, but some student files indicated an over-reliance on resources provided by teachers, and too little evidence of their own research.

98. Procedures for assessment and monitoring of students' progress operate efficiently. Data from a national system comparing students' average GCSE scores with results at GCE A level are shared with students, and influence the individual target grades negotiated with them. Progress is monitored regularly both in lessons and on written homework. Marking of students' work is thorough and appropriately detailed. Some teachers set targets for improvement in written work. Lateness to lessons is challenged appropriately. Recruitment to most courses is good. Attempts to improve the recruitment of both sexes into subjects traditionally dominated by only one are being addressed through the pre-course guidance and induction processes.

### **Leadership and management**

99. Leadership of courses is very good. Documentation is well organised and available to all teaching staff. There are clear policies that are followed in practice. Staff are effectively supported in the development of their teaching skills and in the provision of resources for their teaching. Newly qualified and inexperienced teachers value the careful monitoring and help provided by more experienced staff. The supportive, collective approach amongst teachers creates a consistently good climate of learning for students. Effective self-assessment, monitoring and evaluation focus on improving provision for students through good teaching, sound schemes of work and sufficient learning resources. An action plan to address the poor achievement in GCE AS psychology has been implemented. All subject teachers strive to achieve success with all students, including those with relatively low ability profiles. Liaison with the nominated link-governor is effective.

## English



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

### **Strengths**

- very good pass rates
- very good individual support for students
- effective course management
- good teaching
- good provision for students for whom English is a second language.

### **Weaknesses**

- lack of provision for students at level 2
- insufficient access to computers to meet student demand.

### **Scope of provision**

100. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in English language, English literature, and English language and literature. The offer also includes GCSE English and a course for an international English language testing system (IELTS) for students whose first language is not English. At the time of the inspection, there were 244 students enrolled on GCE AS English courses, 153 on GCE A level, 103 on GCSE and 17 on IELTS.

### **Achievement and standards**

101. Student achievement is good. For the two years to 2001, pass rates at or near 100% were achieved in two of the three GCE A-level subjects offered. The number of students gaining high grades is above the national average. The pass rate in GCE A-level English language fell by 10%

between 1999 and 2001 to slightly below the national average. Results in 2001 for the new GCE AS qualifications in all three English subjects were very good. The percentage of GCSE candidates gaining grades A\* to C was above the national average in two out of the three years to 2001. Retention rates are close to the national averages. About half of those students who take English GCE A levels progress into HE.

102. Most student work seen during the inspection was good. Coursework on the GCE A-level programmes shows much inventiveness, originality and application. Students work well in their lessons, individually or in groups.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in English, 1999 to 2001***

| Qualification                               | Level | Completion year: | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| GCSE English language                       | 2     | No. of starts    | 150  | 102  | 126  |
|                                             |       | % retention      | 83   | 70   | 75   |
|                                             |       | % pass rate      | 65   | 35   | 60   |
| GCE A-level English literature              | 3     | No. of starts    | 87   | 87   | 97   |
|                                             |       | % retention      | 84   | 85   | 81   |
|                                             |       | % pass rate      | 92   | 100  | 100  |
| GCE A-level English language and literature | 3     | No. of starts    | 32   | 23   | 32   |
|                                             |       | % retention      | 75   | 87   | 81   |
|                                             |       | % pass rate      | 91   | 100  | 96   |
| GCE A-level English language                | 3     | No. of starts    | 108  | 91   | 91   |
|                                             |       | % retention      | 75   | 78   | 75   |
|                                             |       | % pass rate      | 95   | 88   | 85   |

Source: ISR (1999 and 2000), college (2001).

***Quality of education and training***

103. Most teaching is good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned. Teachers demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm and knowledge. The most effective lessons are purposeful and well structured. Supporting material is good. In lessons, students feel free to make contributions, and raise queries to improve their learning. In some lessons, there is insufficient scope for students to think independently. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students' individual preferred learning styles, and make appropriate adjustments. There is good use of a range of teaching and learning resources, both paper based and electronic. The English team produces very good original study guides for students' use. The department makes sound use of internal and external online learning and research opportunities for students. In-house study material produced by staff is available to students over the college intranet. Within the English building students have inadequate opportunities to use computers.

104. Marking of students' work is good. Teachers provide helpful written comments on how students can improve. Assessment and moderation are accurate and based upon appropriate external standards. Both students and teachers attach importance to the disciplined, but caring working style of the department and the good individual guidance and support which students receive from staff. Regular reviews of students' progress lead to effective action planning for improvement. Teachers identify students' learning support needs effectively.

105. English teaching areas are pleasant, and located in an attractive listed building fronted by lawns. The construction of the building makes it inaccessible to students with restricted mobility.

Rooms are airy and well decorated; students' work and other relevant material are on display.

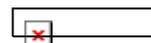
106. There is a good range of courses available in English at level 3, and English courses are popular. At the time, of the inspection there was no alternative to the GCSE course for students who have yet to gain a grade C at this level.

107. Assessment of key skills communication is available through assignments planned as an integral part of English courses, but this is not used consistently. There are many enrichment opportunities available outside lessons, including frequent theatre trips, public speaking competitions, literature field trips, study days, and a creative writing workshop.

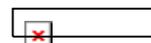
### **Leadership and management**

108. The English area is well led. Course management is effective and there is a commitment to continuous improvement. Responsibilities are shared within the team and there is a supportive work ethic among staff. Course teams meet regularly and maintain formative course review logs. The review process is closely and effectively focused on improving learning. For example, timings of assessments have been changed in response to student and staff feedback.

## **Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**

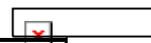


| <b>Level</b> | <b>16-18 %</b> | <b>19+ %</b> |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b>     | 0              | 16           |
| <b>2</b>     | 10             | 10           |
| <b>3</b>     | 88             | 75           |
| <b>4/5</b>   | 0              | 0            |
| <b>Other</b> | 2              | 0            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b>     | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Provided by the college in 2001.

\* individual percentages do not total 100% as a result of rounding

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age**



| <b>Curriculum area</b> | <b>16-18 No.</b> | <b>19+ No.</b> | <b>Total Enrolments %</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|

|                           |              |           |            |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Science                   | 358          | 21        | 29         |
| Agriculture               | 0            | 0         | 0          |
| Construction              | 0            | 0         | 0          |
| Engineering               | 0            | 0         | 0          |
| Business                  | 118          | 1         | 9          |
| Hotel and catering        | 49           | 1         | 4          |
| Health and community care | 36           | 14        | 4          |
| Art and design            | 124          | 2         | 10         |
| Humanities                | 540          | 5         | 42         |
| Basic education           | 10           | 7         | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>1,235</b> | <b>51</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Provided by the college in 2001.

\* individual percentages do not total 100% as a result of rounding

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

| Level<br>(Long<br>Courses) | Retention and pass rate      | Completion year |             |               |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
|                            |                              | 16-18           |             |               |
|                            |                              | 1997/<br>98     | 1998/<br>99 | 1999/<br>2000 |
| <b>2</b>                   | Starters excluding transfers | 710             | 657         | 605           |
|                            | Retention rate (%)           | 79              | 77          | 73            |
|                            | National average (%)         | 79              | 79          | 82            |
|                            | Pass rate (%)                | 95              | 97          | 92            |
|                            | National average (%)         | 83              | 85          | 82            |
| <b>3</b>                   | Starters excluding transfers | 2,075           | 2,265       | 2,172         |
|                            | Retention rate (%)           | 77              | 80          | 83            |
|                            | National average (%)         | 78              | 78          | 80            |
|                            | Pass rate (%)                | 72              | 73          | 71            |
|                            | National average (%)         | 86              | 85          | 85            |

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1999/2000): Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

2. College rates for 1997/98 - 1998/99: Benchmarking Data (1997/98) to (1998/99): Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

3. College rates for (1999/2000): Provided by the college in 2001.

**Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level**

| Courses                | Teaching judged to be: |                |                          | No of sessions observed |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                        | Good or better %       | Satisfactory % | Less than satisfactory % |                         |
| Level 3 (advanced)     | 70                     | 29             | 1                        | 107                     |
| Level 2 (intermediate) | 63                     | 38             | 0                        | 16                      |
| Other sessions         | 0                      | 67             | 33                       | 3                       |
| <b>Totals</b>          | <b>68</b>              | <b>31</b>      | <b>2</b>                 | <b>126</b>              |

\* individual percentages do not total 100% as a result of rounding

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